

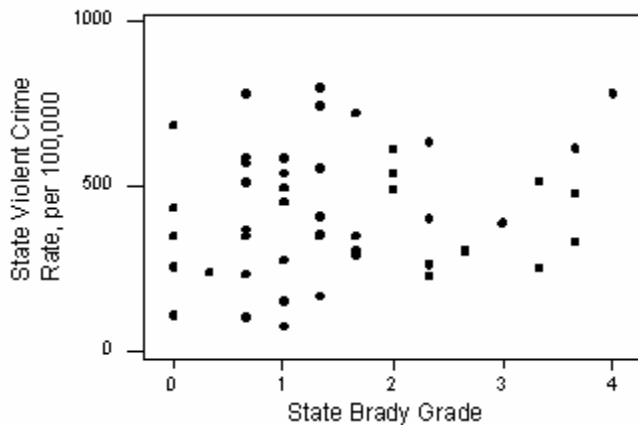
State Got a Poor ‘Brady Gun Grade’? Don’t Rush to Pack Your Bags.

Last Christmas, the Brady anti-gun campaign gave the world its annual report card, grading how well various states “protect kids from guns”. Their actual grading standards go far beyond just “protecting kids”, and, as nearly as I can tell, include all aspects of gun regulation. My state, Utah, received a D-, along with Texas, Indiana, Alaska, and several other nice places to live. Some other nice places, like Montana and Wyoming received the dreaded Brady F. Can we bear the shame?

Hawaii got an A-, as did California. I wonder if it is the tropical climate? Apparently not, because Maryland got an A.

So, if your state rated poorly, you should be alarmed, and if your state did well, perhaps you can take some well-deserved satisfaction in having done better than the rest of us.

Or not.

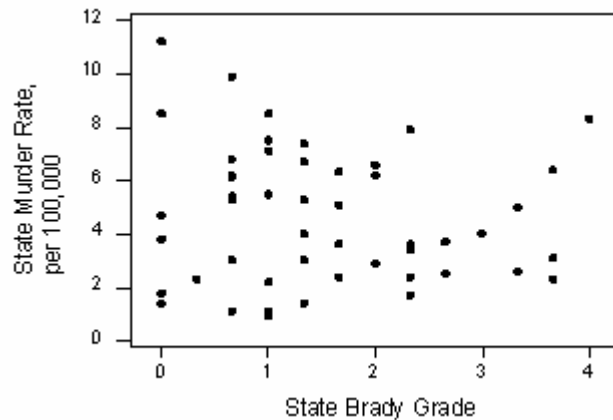


The Brady folks grade on an awfully tough curve. On a 4.0 scale, the average state got only a 1.5, halfway between a D+ and a C-. Almost nobody meets their ideal. Out of 50 states, the only full A was Maryland.

If the Brady Campaign’s most favored gun laws work, the evidence would be a lower probability of being killed, or of

being the victim of violent crime, in the states that conform with the Brady ideal. The whole point of controlling guns is to reduce violence and death, after all. If you look, and can’t find evidence of something like that, then you have to conclude that Brady ideals are at best, are very weak in combating violence. At worst, they count for nothing.

To look for the evidence, I simply took the grades given each state, and converted them to numbers. An F counted 0.0, an A counted 4.0, and a C+ counted 2.33, pretty much like schools do to calculate a grade point average. Then I went to the FBI’s crime statistics web page, and got the violent crime rate and the



murder+non-negligent manslaughter rate per 100,000 people for each state. It was then easy to plot the crime numbers against the Brady grade, to see if states that scored well actually provide a safer environment for their citizens. They don't.

Those of you with an intense interest in statistics may want to know that I also did a regression analysis on the data just to verify the tale of the graphs. The correlation between your state's Brady grade, and its actual murder or violent crime rate is absolutely no better than you would get if you ran pairs of random numbers through the analysis.

In short, your chances of being killed, raped, or assaulted are, on average, no better, and no worse, in states that got the coveted Brady A or A-, than they are in states that got a D or an F. If the laws the Brady Campaign favors were very successful in combating violence, you could not possibly get this result.

If you're in charge of egg production, and production is down, what should you do? Simple. Hire people to squeeze the chickens. It annoys the chickens, and it does not actually help egg production, but it sounds plausible, and it allows you to say that you are "doing something to combat low egg production."

While cruising the web for my data, I came across the web site for the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, which has an interest in reducing death and injury. They lay out a perfectly sensible scheme for solving problems, and preventing injury and illness, including gun violence: 1) Define what the problem is, 2) Find out what causes the problem, 3) Find out what works to prevent the problem, and 4) Put a prevention program in place. I think their stated ideal approach is impeccable.

The problem with the Brady Campaign is that they skipped Step 3. They are not working to find something that works to prevent the problem. They are feverishly working on Step 4, hopelessly wedded to pre-conceived ideas that sound good, but are actually chicken squeezing programs. You'd be amazed how much of that kind of work you have to do to get substantial results.

If you want to look for a cure for violence, you might as well look to the weather, or to the prime interest rate as to the Brady Campaign. Statistically, they all exert about the same amount of influence on death and violence.

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